



RE: HB1380 HD2 Establishes a farm-to-school program in the department of education to increase the procurement of locally grown fruits and vegetables....

Before the House Committee on Finance

Thursday, February 24, 2011

Time 11:30am

Conference Room 308

Position: In Support, with Proposed Amendments

Organization: Hawaii County Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition

Testifier: Kathie Pomeroy, Hawaii County NPAC Coordinator,
Testimony submitted on 2/23/11

Aloha Chair Mr. Oshiro, Vice Chair Ms. Lee, and Members of the Finance Committee

The Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition (NPAC) works statewide to address the obesity epidemic and concomitant diseases by advancing policies that enable people to make healthier diet and exercise choices. In Hawaii County, NPAC promotes ease of implementation of the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) and promotion of Hawaii grown produce to elementary school students via the USDA FFVP program. We work with the Office of Hawaii Child Nutrition, schools (both DOE and Charter), policy makers, farmers, processors, distributors, and the Hawaii Island School Garden Network, all important players in Hawaii's emerging Farm to School movement.

Hawaii County NPAC recommends the following amendments which would make HB1380HD2 effective and utilize existing resources:

SECTION 1:

1. Farm to School Pilot Program: Established in the Department of Agriculture a farm-to-school pilot program, including a minimum of three schools or three school complexes for three years. The purpose of the pilot program is to understand and increase procurement of locally-grown fruits and vegetables by selected public schools.

2. Exemption from Policy Constraints (ACT 175): All schools participating in the Farm to School pilot program will be exempt from Act 175, SLH 2009 which removed the exemption of fresh produce from Chapter 103D, Hawaii Public Procurement Code, HRS. *Discussion:* Please note that a repeal of Act 175 or an exemption from Act 175 may still not be sufficient to prompt farmers to sell to schools, however, it's an important obstacle to remove. The local cost of ag production is at least 20 percent higher than the

mainland. If the price of oil reaches \$150 a barrel and shipping cost goes up by another 33 percent, then local ag will be more competitive. At the current time, a Hawaii Preference of 15 percent applies in Act 175, SLH 2009 but local farmers are still not fully engaged, partly due to a lack of understanding of the state procurement process or an interpretation that the process is too costly for them (learning curve, compliance, time). HB1380HD2 with proposed amendments attempts to address this farmer education barrier.

3. Farm to School Pilot Program Study: This study, conducted by departments such as CTAHR, DOH, and DOA with data provided by the DOE, and even by NGOs in partnership with DOE, will measure the impact of the Farm to School Pilot Program.

4. Dedicated HDOA Staff Position: If there is an appropriation, it should be given to HDOA for staff person to implement, and work with CTAHR, DOE, DOH, and NGOs (including Kokua Foundation, NPAC, Hawaii Island School Garden Network, etc.) to help execute and evaluate the Farm to School Program and Study (Appropriation: \$50-70,000). The staff person would convene a working group of all these public and private parties to assist in the development of the Farm to School program. Such a working group is already partially organized and would benefit from a lead staff person in HDOA. Another option is to make more money available to contract out these duties.

5. Hawaii-grown Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP): Delete this section entirely as it is not a priority for funding. The USDA FFVP, already mandated and funded, can serve this purpose. Hawaii County NPAC is already doing so. If this part of the bill remains, depending on the extent of the program, it will need at least a half to full-time staff person to execute it plus an appropriation (at least \$40,000) to fund the program deliverables (produce, equipment, paper goods, etc.).

6. School Gardens: School gardens are for educational purposes, not production purposes on the scale of the school lunch program. A common sense variation of food safety certification specific to teaching gardens, without the required record-keeping and fees, would be sufficient to ensure food safety. The food could be served in the FFVP. Please note that the USDA FFVP does not require food safety certification from its vendors.

SECTION 2:

Farmer to Food Bank: Delete this section entirely. While the concept is important for immediate delivery of local farm produce to the hungry, it would require funding for a community food assessment, the development of distribution infrastructure to get the

food to the food banks, and a fair price to the farmers. This belongs in a separate piece of legislation with adequate funding.

Respectfully,

Kathie Pomeroy, N.D.

Kathie Pomeroy, N.D., NPAC Coordinator

Hawaii County Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition: www.npachawaiiicounty.com

A Project of the John A. Burns School of Medicine, Office of Public Health Studies

Funded by the Tobacco Settlement Fund, Healthy Hawaii Initiative,
and the Hawaii Department of Health